

most closely with that which Jesus invited, nay demanded, on the part of His disciples towards Himself. He had not explained on what (dogmatic) grounds that demand was based, any more than they say on what (dogmatic) grounds it is conceded. But He made it clear that a man's attitude towards Himself is the supreme criterion of his standing before God both here and hereafter. In this case also we have the same seizing by the Church of the underflowing current of vital thought in the mind of Jesus, and the like expression of it first of all in life and practice, and that before the interpretation took form and substance in propositions regarding the Person of Christ.

And if the primitive Church and even St. Paul refrained from carrying the categorical interpretation of the Person of Christ to the point of calling Him God, there were good reasons for that. On the one hand, they had the ingrained shrinking of an intense monotheism from any such apparent infringing on the sole majesty of the

Most High. On the other, they were innocent of the philosophical training and ignorant of the philosophical terms which enabled the Greek Fathers of a later generation at least to grapple with the problem.

Not a few other cases of similar interpretation could be adduced. But reviewing these three, which are typical and in a sense crucial, they seem to reveal a real homogeneity of process, a real common source in the impression made by the Personality of Jesus acting as an interpretative factor on the deposit of His teaching, and a real common issue in an ethical ideal not wholly unrealized, which alike in principle and in detail is a reproduction of His character. Such are the lines, slender but infrangible, which span the 'unbridgeable chasm.' What we have in our records is not a series of new departures, but a continuous movement. And it is one whose origin is sufficiently accounted for by Jesus of Nazareth, whose legitimate issue is seen in the Christ of the Epistles.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ACTS.

ACTS XXI. 13.

Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

GRAPHIC pictures have often been drawn of scenes in which spiritual pastors have taken leave of their flocks, but nothing more pathetic was ever written than the few brief sentences by which St. Luke describes the Apostle's farewell to the elders at Miletus. The final prayer and commendation to God, the sore weeping and lamentation, the overwhelming affection of the last embrace, their painful struggle to tear themselves apart—it all makes up a picture of sadness and sorrow, often, no doubt, equalled but rarely surpassed.

It must have made St. Paul waver for a moment in his long-cherished determination to see Jerusalem once more, and in all the joy and gladness of the Pentecostal Feast; but the temptation was resisted, and again, 'he steadfastly set his face,' like his Master, towards the Holy City, and the vessel on

which he embarked soon carried him out of the sight of his friends.

When we consider the text we discover that (1) it reveals the spirit of St. Paul's life; (2) it suggests the motives which inspired it; and (3) it affords an example of the true principle of life in Christ Jesus.

I.

THE SPIRIT OF ST. PAUL'S LIFE.

1. There is a great contrast between Saul the Pharisee and Paul the Apostle. In his youth and early manhood Paul had cherished dreams of selfish ambition which had called forth all his energies. A native of Tarsus, a free-born Roman citizen, and receiving the best education which the time and circumstances afforded, the most brilliant prospects opened before him. Soon he became conscious of possessing extraordinary gifts, of inherent powers fitting him for greatness; and his spirit was fervent, and quivered with intensest life. But now all was changed, and a spirit of self-sacrifice supplanted that of self-interest and self-aggrandizement.

It was a surprising change, but it was as persistent as it was conspicuous; and it was maintained through storm and trial until it issued in a martyr's death.

2. Was his present decision to go to Jerusalem a worthy exemplification of this spirit? He had been warned by Agabus, a prophet, that he should not go to Jerusalem. Taking Paul's girdle and binding his own feet and hands, Agabus said, 'Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' It was certainly a prophecy which Paul could not disregard. He would have accepted it, we may be sure, as a message from God, had it not been for the persuasion produced within him by the Holy Spirit that God's will was otherwise. He was quite clear as to his duty: 'I go,' he said, 'bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem.'

There are times in the history of every conscientious man when he himself alone is the proper judge of what he ought to do. Perhaps at such times his worst advisers are those who love him most. Because they love him, they are unwilling that he should face danger and incur risk. Or, if he must run the risk, let him take every precaution. How nobly is the situation set forth in Millais' picture of the Huguenot! All the pleading face asks is, that he should tie the white badge round his arm, or let her tie it. But it cannot be, he must be true to his own conviction of duty. So he goes forth to death because he can do no otherwise. Paul is persuaded that his Master has called him to Jerusalem.¹

3. The decision, however, cost Paul a struggle. 'What do ye,' he said, 'weeping and breaking my heart?' The tears and entreaties of his friends touched his heart. It was difficult for him to resist them. They tended to 'unnerve' him, a rendering which one critic substitutes for the word 'breaking.' His keen sensibilities left him open to influences of that kind, in a way and to a degree unfelt by sterner and more phlegmatic natures. There is a passion in his words which significantly betrays the severity of his inward conflict. It was necessary for him to summon all his resolution in order to counteract the effect of his friends' earnest pleadings and tears.

Bunyan in wishing to go to prison rather than sin against his own conscience, wrote: 'The parting with my wife and children was to me like the pulling of flesh from my bones. It suggested the many miseries to which they would be exposed, especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer to my heart than any of the others. Poor child, I thought,

what sorrow thou art likely to meet in this world. Thou wilt be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot endure the wind to blow upon thee, and it goeth to the quick to leave thee, yet I must be faithful to my God.' And the whole world now knows that he was faithful.

When Bishop Patteson, as a young man, inwardly realized that God had called him to labour among the heathen in Melanesia, the interview which followed between himself and his father, Sir John Patteson, was most pathetic. It was a trial of human feeling, the old judge manifesting the deepest anxiety and sorrow. When he knew that his son had arrived at a firm decision to go, he hastened to another room and cried out with passionate entreaty, 'I can't let him go,' but scarcely had the words escaped his lips, when he recalled them with a reverent recognition of the Divine will, and added, 'God forbid that I should stop him.'

4. Paul, then, was obeying a true instinct when he held to his purpose of going to Jerusalem; he was guided by what he acknowledged to be God's special word to himself; and, with this conviction, he was ready to face all the consequences—imprisonment, chains, even death itself. This was true courage, sublime for its strength, and for the cause to which it was devoted.

When Dr. Duff, the great Scotch missionary, came home after his life-work in India, a crowded meeting was held in Edinburgh to hear him on the claims of India upon the Christian Church. For two hours and a half the old man went on, holding the audience by his eloquence. Then he fainted, and was carried out of the hall. Presently he came to, and asked, 'Where was I? What was I doing?' In a moment memory returned, and he said, 'Take me back; I must finish my speech.' 'You will kill yourself if you do,' said his friends. 'I shall die if I don't,' exclaimed the old man. They took him back. The whole meeting rose, many in tears. His strength failed and he could not rise; but gathering himself up for one final effort he said: 'Fathers of Scotland! have you any more sons for India? I have spent my life there, and my life is gone; but if there are no more young men to go, I will go back myself, and lay my bones there, that the people may know there is one man in Christian Britain ready to die for India.'²

Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified
His loyalty he kept; his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Though single.

II.

THE MOTIVES WHICH INSPIRED IT.

1. It has always been the practice of the world to throw doubts upon the disinterestedness of the men who have become distinguished for their services in the cause of Christ. The fact that they

¹ J. Iverach.

² *The Treasury* (New York), July 1896, p. 248.

have earned a great reputation, that they have filled a distinguished place in history, that sometimes they have received honours and rewards in this world, has been used to support the insinuation that lower motives actuated them. 'Doth Job serve God for naught?' was the sneering question of the Satan in Job, and its malignant hiss has often been heard since that day.

But Paul's name has escaped this imputation. His course of life was so consistent, the labours he undertook so abundant, the perils he willingly encountered so real and threatening, his renunciation of all earthly ambitions so complete, that all confess that he was under the sway of motives of the highest order.

2. Thus the question arises, What were the special motives by which Paul was inspired? What was it that constrained him in his great career? And to that question four answers suggest themselves.

(1) There is no doubt that *personal devotion to Christ* Himself, the Christ who arrested him on the way to Damascus, thus calling him to service who had before been a blasphemer and persecutor, was the supreme motive of Paul's life. No more lovely blending of melting tenderness and iron determination has ever been put into words than that cry of his, 'What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart?' followed by the great utterance which proclaimed his readiness to bear all things, even death itself, for 'the name of the Lord Jesus.' What kindled and fed that noble flame of self-devotion? The love of Jesus Christ, built on the sense that He had redeemed the soul of His servant, and had thereby bought him for His own.

(2) He had a strong *belief in the gospel as the power of God unto salvation*. 'I am not ashamed,' he said, 'of the gospel of Christ.' He felt its power in his own life. By it he had been redeemed from a life of self and legal obedience into a life of love and liberty. And wherever he preached it he saw that it produced similar effects in others, and that by it the Gentiles were turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God.

(3) He had a *passion for souls*. His love for his kinsmen according to the flesh and desire for their salvation is expressively revealed in his burning words, 'For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my brethren according to the flesh.' But the same passion was kindled at the thought of the Romans with their

pagan superstitions and pagan vices. 'I long to see you,' he writes, 'that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles.'

(4) *He regarded his sufferings as a filling up of the sufferings of Christ*. For this reason he desired to know the fellowship of His sufferings, as a link binding him closer to the Master whom he loved and served. And no one who reads St. Paul's Epistles carefully can fail to see how all his perils and sufferings and persecutions he accepted as a necessary corollary from the fact that he shared that Christ-like life which could not be perfect without fellowship in Christ's sufferings and death.

Francis Coillard, in 1884, when he had determined to extend his efforts to the Barotsi tribes, wrote: 'Oh! if you could only know what one feels on finding oneself on the threshold of this Central Africa where the least ray of the gospel has not penetrated! If those friends who blame our imprudence could see from afar what we see, and feel what we feel, they would be the first to wonder that those redeemed by Christ should be so backward in devotion, and know so little of the spirit of self-sacrifice. They would be ashamed of the hesitations that hinder us. These innumerable tribes, of which the Barotsi is only the first on our way, are sitting in the shadow of death; they perish as pagans amid horrible and bloody superstitions, while we have the Light and Life which we owe it to them to impart. We must remember that it was not by interceding for the world in glory that Jesus saved it. *He gave Himself*. Our prayers for the evangelization of the world are but a bitter irony so long as we only give of our superfluity, and draw back before the sacrifice of ourselves.'¹

III.

AN EXAMPLE OF THE TRUE PRINCIPLE OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS.

1. Although Paul's life was that of a missionary and ended in martyrdom, yet the principle of it belongs to the Christian life as such. We are none of us our own, but are bought with a price; therefore we should live not for ourselves but for Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us. Such a life will bring peace and satisfaction. The richest, fullest life is that which is devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and His cause. The great mistake is to suppose that such a life is unwise, or that it means the loss of anything that is truly valuable. It is the selfish worldly life that produces unrest, dissatisfaction and disappointment.

2. If we feel that we have been 'bought with a price,' we too, in our small spheres, will be filled with that ennobling passion of devoted love which

¹ F. Coillard, *On the Threshold of Central Africa*, 159.

will not count life dear if He calls us to give it up. Let us learn from Paul how to blend the utmost gentleness and tender responsiveness to all love with fixed determination to glorify the Name. A strong will and a loving heart make a marvellously beautiful combination, and should both abide in every Christian.

Pramenchoff is only fifty-six years of age, but his hair and beard are grey, and his appearance leads one to think that he has passed the threescore years and ten of the Psalmist. There was hardly another man in the Russian Baptist Congress of 1910 who had such a record.

Baptized in 1884, he immediately began to preach the gospel. Thus was he brought into conflict with the authorities. Twice his house and goods were utterly destroyed, thrice was he beaten until the blood streamed down his back, and unconsciousness alone stayed the hands of his flagellation.

Imprisonment followed his beating, but the hero was undaunted. At last he was sent into exile by *administrative order*—i.e., without trial. Two years later he was liberated, and returned home to preach again. In a week he was in a prison-cell, and finally was exiled for life to the far-off, dreaded Siberia.

For seven and a half months he never had his chains off,

day or night. He was compelled to work with the lowest and vilest criminals. In the providence of God, the birth of an heir to the Tzar brought about his liberty, after the lapse of fourteen years. On leaving exile he was not provided with shoes, and he had to walk 264 versts barefooted over the frozen ground.

Altogether he has been in prison fifty-two times, having sampled the interiors of no less than twenty-one different gaols. Even now he is forbidden to return to his native place, and has had all civil rights taken away from him.

In reply to a question from me, he said, 'The love of Jesus more than compensates me for all I have endured. I thank my God that He counts me worthy to suffer for the sake of the Kingdom of God.'¹

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Recent Biblical and Oriental Archaeology.

BY THE REV. A. H. SAYCE, D.D., LL.D., LITT.D., PROFESSOR OF ASSYRIOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

THE latest publication of the Jews' College in London is a very interesting little monograph by Dr. Samuel Daiches on *Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and in the later Jewish Literature*. Oil, as Dr. Daiches says, 'was regarded in antiquity as a mystic element, and was used for consecration and dedication.' Hence came the employment of it for consecrating stones and priestly or semi-priestly personages both in Babylonia and among the Israelites. It was also employed in magic. In the magical texts of early Babylonia it plays a conspicuous part: 'the oil of life,' or, as it is also called, 'the oil of the incantation of Ea and Merodach,' assisted the sick man to recover. A ritual text gives instructions for the consecration of the oil which was poured on the water of the libation; when the oil is 'faultless,' we are told, 'the great gods come near.'

Dr. Daiches shows that both in the Talmud and in later Jewish writings the Babylonian use of

oil for magical purposes was known and copied. It was supposed not only to be efficacious in healing, but also to contribute to a knowledge of the future. A common way of discovering the future was by pouring oil on the thumb-nail of a boy, who, after gazing earnestly at it, would see certain spirits invoked by the diviner and learn from them what was to happen. Sometimes the oil was placed on the palm of the hand instead of the nail, reminding us of the similar use of ink in modern Egypt, which has been made famous by Lane. In the case of possession a demon could be expelled by pouring oil over a pot filled with water and repeating a psalm as an incantation. This is purely Babylonian, the Biblical psalm merely taking the place of the Babylonian psalm, which was utilized for the same purpose. The belief that sickness is due to demonic possession was itself of Babylonian origin.

Dr. Daiches notes that a magical influence